4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOII Bahia Brazilians SOII

Outside the city of Bahia and skirting the rim of All Saints Bay lies the Reconcavo,[1] some sixty miles long and varying from a few to thirty miles wide. Its soil is a cretaceous marl of great thickness, similar to the black gumbo of southern Arkansas and northern Texas, known locally as *massapé* or, in literal translation, "that which sticks to the feet." It is quite fertile and well watered and today appears only slightly impaired after nearly four centuries of cultivation. This is the cane and tobacco area upon which formerly both Bahia's commercial greatness and her need for reliable agricultural (hence slave) labor was based.

The Reconcavo was formerly a center of large landholdings, of a rural aristocracy, of a patriarchal system, and of slavery. Today, cane and tobacco are still cultivated, although the former, and to some extent the latter, languish by reason of the condition of the world-market and the persistence of primitive techniques of production. Although large landholdings are still common, the rural aristocracy is decadent, its prestige having suffered a gradual but persistent decline throughout the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries with the loss of the sugar monopoly, the growth of the coastal towns, and the accompanying increase in prestige of the urban professional classes. The abolition of slavery in the late nineteenth century was the final blow, and absentee ownership is now the predominating pattern. However, the present population is more dense in the Reconcavo than elsewhere in the state outside the city of Bahia and remains to this day markedly negroid in character.

[1] The literal meanings of the Portuguese word *reconcavo* are (1) a bay of semicircular shape and (2) the environs of a city. These two meanings appear to have fused in the Bahian use of the term.

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/13 cont./ may not be of African blood (3).

3. Arthur Ramos, Introduçao a Antropologia Brasileira, II, Rio de Janeiro, 1947.

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The Indians and the descendants of the cross between Indians and Whites are generally called cabôclos, but this expression is no longer very common in Bahia and rarely serves to characterize the corresponding type. The term cabôclo has become, like that of "my Negro," rather a formula of tenderness between individuals of any color whatsoever. It must be noted, moreover, thanks to old statistics, that toward the middle of the eighteenth century, in response to complaints about Brazilian "nativism," the Portuguese government prohibited the use of the term cabôclo, to which was then attached an insulting meaning, and granted at the same time the civil status of Whites to Indians and to their descendants of mixed blood, so that they could contract marriage with the Whites and fulfill official duties in the colony; it is in that manner that the contingents of mamelucos or cabôclos were assimilated with the Whites in the military roles of the time. The word meanwhile lost its insulting import and in our day is even considered a compliment when it refers to a cabôclo bom, that is to say, a man of good manners.

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The Negroid albinos and the mulattoes with red, blond, or light auburn hair are known by the name of sararás.

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The exact designation of these different types has always /14/ represented a difficulty, as much for anthropologists as for the persons charged with identifying school children, the military, the criminals (1).

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1. According to the Bahian anthropologist Nina Rodriguez (in her book As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil /The Human Races and Penal Responsibility in Brazil/, 3rd edition, written at the beginning of the century), the métis include: 1st, the mulattoes produced from the cross between the White and the Negro:

[SALVADOR]

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a) mulattoes of prime blood; b) light mulattoes tending to revert to the white race; c) dark mulattoes, cabras, product tending to revert to the black race, some almost completely identified with the creole Negroes, the others more easily separable; 2nd, the mamelucos or cabôclos, products of the cross between White and Indian; 3rd, the product of the cross of the three races and especially the cross between the mulatto and the Indian or with the mamelucos and cabôclos. Arthur Ramos in his book A aculturaçao negra no Brasil /Negro Acculturation in Brazil/, 1942, p. 58, and in other works, one of which is "The Negro in Brazil," in Brazil, Portrait of Half a Continent, edited by Lynn Smith and A. Marchant, New York, 1950, p. 130, adopts almost the same classification, but proposes that, in order to avoid inaccuracies, one use the words pardo, mulatto, and métis as synonyms.

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In response to the demand of a lawyer, the head of the Bureau of Judicial Identification of the civil police of the State of Bahia stated some years ago that in his department one uses, according to the judgment of the identifier, the terms White, moreno, pardo, métis, and Black. A woman official who has worked for a long time in this service describes the different Bahia types thus: "The métis is a descendant of Black and mulatto; the pardo is the son of a mulatto and a White; the mulatto is derived from a White and a Black: he may be light, but he will always have lips that are thick and reddened by pigmentation; the moreno is the mulatto fino, and the Black is an individual with pronounced Negro traits."

[SALVADOR]

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Brazil," in Brazil, Portrait of Half a Continent, p. 334.

Because of crossbreeding and other sociobiological factors, the darkest group of black phenotype was gradually absorbed by ethnic blending; the Whites increased at a slightly faster rhythm, while the number of métis registered in the statistics as pardos rose and gave birth finally, as a result of the mixture, to a group in which European ancestry predominated (2).

2. Donald Pierson, op. cit., p. 417.

"Among our ancestors there were already creoles of "clean belly" (barriga limpa). Their children, being themselves /24/ children of lighter men, tended progressively toward the color of their fathers. Perhaps Bahia is a city that contains many female Blacks and métisses of barriga limpa. Everybody remarks that we are moving toward a population totally of mixed blood but of white appearance (1)."

1. J. Valadares, op. cit., p. 91.

In consulting the death certificates recorded between 1897 and 1938 (2),

2. A. Rabelo Leite, "A tuberculose do preto na Bahia /The tuberculosis of the Black in Bahia/"; Cesar de Araujo, Anais do Iº Congresso Nacional de Tuberculose /Annals of the First National Tuberculosis Congress/, Vol. I, 1930; see also E. F. Frazier, "The Negro Family in Bahia, Brazil," American Sociological Review, Vol. VII, No. 4, 1942, p. 467.

one can see that the proportional quantities of each type varies in our city as shown below: